

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MEXICO 15605

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MX

SUBJECT: MEXICAN FOREIGN POLICY UNDER JLP--PRELIMINARY
INDICATIONS

1. SUMMARY: PRESIDENT LOPEZ PORTILLO'S INAUGURAL ADDRESS AND HIS FIRST ROUND OF APPOINTMENTS TO KEY POSITIONS IN THE SECRETARIAT OF FOREIGN RELATIONS SUPPORT THE VIEW THAT MEXICO, FOR THE TIME BEING AT LEAST, WILL RETURN TO A MORE NARROWLY FOCUSED FOREIGN POLICY WHICH REFLECTS THE COUNTRY'S IMMEDIATE NEEDS DURING THIS DIFFICULT PERIOD OF INTERNAL ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DISEQUILIBRIUM. WITHOUT REPUDIATING PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA'S FLAMBOYANT SUPPORT OF THIRD WORLD ISSUES, LOPEZ PORTILLO APPARENTLY INTENDS TO PLACE GREATER EMPHASIS ON IMPROVING RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES AND TO ADHERE LESS DRAMATICALLY TO THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF SOVEREIGNTY, INDEPENDENCE AND INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY UNDERLYING TRADITIONAL MEXICAN POLICY. PRAGMATISM AND SELF-INTEREST WILL BE THE DOMINANT MOTIVATIONS.

WHILE THERE WILL PROBABLY BE NO SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN MEXICO'S BASIC POSITIONS ON A WIDE RANGE OF NORTH-SOUTH ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL ISSUES, THE TONE AND STYLE OF MEXICAN POLICY WILL LIKELY BE LESS CONFRONTATIONAL. MOREOVER, MEXICO IS NOT LIKELY TO PLACE ITSELF AUTOMATICALLY IN THE FOREFRONT OF CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES (E.G., ZIONISM-RACISM) WHERE THE POLITICAL RETURNS ARE SMALL IN COMPARISON TO THE POTENTIALLY ADVERSE IMPACT ON MEXICO'S IMMEDIATE ECONOMIC INTERESTS AND/OR BROADER POLITICAL RELATIONSHIPS, PARTICULARLY INVOLVING THE UNITED STATES.

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STATES. END SUMMARY.

2. INAUGURAL ADDRESS

THE PRESIDENT'S INAUGURAL MESSAGE WAS PROBABLY MORE SIGNIFICANT IN TERMS OF WHAT HE DID NOT SAY THAN WHAT HE DID SAY ABOUT MEXICO'S FOREIGN POLICY (SEE MEXICO 15168 FOR SUMMARY). FIRST, THE PRESIDENT DEVOTED ONLY THREE PAGES OF A 70 PAGE ADDRESS TO FOREIGN POLICY--A CLEAR INDICATION THAT HIS GOVERNMENT'S FIRST PRIORITY IS TO RESTORE CONFIDENCE AND COPE WITH MEXICO'S SERIOUS INTERNAL PROBLEMS. HE BEGAN IN LOW KEY BY OUTLINING IN GENERAL TERMS THE TRADITIONAL MEXICAN PRINCIPLES OF INDEPENDENCE, SOVEREIGNTY, ETC. HE ENDORSED MEXICO'S COMMITMENT TO DISARMAMENT, ANTI-COLONIAL POSTURE, REJECTION OF IMPERIALISM OF ANY HUE AND ALL FORMS OF SUBMISSION, BUT HE DID SO WITH A SIMPLE, MATTER-OF-FACT STYLE THAT CONTRASTED SHARPLY WITH THE POLITICAL ORATORY OF ECHEVERRIA'S FOREIGN POLICY PRONOUNCEMENTS. TUCKED IN BETWEEN THE LINES WAS AN ENIGMATIC BUT PERHAPS SIGNIFICANT REFERENCE THAT MEXICO "WILL PARTICIPATE IN INTERNATIONAL FORA WHERE GOALS ARE CLEARLY STATED." WHILE REAFFIRMING MEXICO'S SUPPORT FOR THE CHARTER OF ECONOMIC RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF STATES, JLP'S REFERENCE HARDLY DRAMATIZED THIS LEITMOTIF OF THE ECHEVERRIA ERA AND UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES REPRESENTED A MINIMUM GESTURE TO HIS PREDECESSOR'S FOREIGN POLICY.

IN SUM, JLP'S INAUGURAL FOREIGN POLICY SUMMARY WAS LOW-KEY, SOBER, UNDRAMATIC, AND REFLECTIVE OF THE GREATER PRIORITY AND URGENCY WHICH HIS ADMINISTRATION CURRENTLY ATTACHES TO INTERNAL PROBLEMS.

3. FOREIGN SECRETARY

THE SELECTION OF FOREIGN MINISTER SANTIAGO ROEL AND HIS KEY LIEUTENANTS IN THE FOREIGN SECRETARIAT ALSO APPEARS CONSISTENT WITH JLP'S DESIRE TO RETURN TO A FOREIGN POLICY WHICH PLACES PRIMARY EMPHASIS ON MEXICO'S IMMEDIATE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL NEEDS. ALTHOUGH NOT AN EXPERIENCED DIPLOMAT, ROEL IS REPORTEDLY CLOSE TO JLP AND HAS ALREADY TRAVELLED ABROAD ON JLP'S BEHALF. HIS LACK OF DIPLOMATIC EXPERIENCE MEANS THAT HE HAS NOT BEEN IDENTIFIED WITH THE THIRD WORLD AND/OR MULTILATERAL POSITIONS ESPOUSED BY PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA. THUS, HE IS TRULY LOPEZ PORTILLO'S MAN WITH AN OPEN RECORD ON MAJOR AND CONTROVERSIAL FOREIGN POLICY QUESTIONS. THE FACT THAT HE IS FROM MONTERREY, CONFIDENTIAL

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WHICH HAD BEEN A CENTER OF ANTI-ECHEVERRIA FEELING, MAY ALSO HAVE BEEN A POLITICAL FACTOR IN HIS SELECTION AS A MEMBER OF JLP'S CABINET. AS AN IMPORTANT PRI FIGURE, ROEL COULD HELP PROVIDE LOPEZ PORTILLO WITH DOMESTIC POLITICAL INPUT INTO FOREIGN POLICY DECISIONS--AN INPUT ECHEVERRIA WAS OFTEN ACCUSED OF IGNORING. JUDGING FROM HIS ACTIONS SO FAR, ROEL WILL BE A CAUTIOUS CHANCELLOR. HE HAS TWICE TURNED OFF INQUIRING REPORTERS, COMMENTING YESTERDAY JUST PRIOR TO A MEETING WITH THE

PRESIDENT THAT MEXICO WAS NOT IN A MOOD TO TOLERATE ERRORS, HE COULD NOT SAY ANYTHING, AND "DECLARATIONITIS" WOULD BE ABSURD.

4. OTHER TOP APPOINTMENTS

IN ADDITION TO THE SECRETARY OF FOREIGN RELATIONS, LIC. SANTIAGO ROEL, THE FOLLOWING KEY SRE POSITIONS HAVE BEEN FILLED TO DATE:

A. UNDERSECRETARY "A" (CURRENTLY PRIMARILY ECONOMIC AFFAIRS)
- JOSE JUAN DE OLLOQUI, FORMER AMBASSADOR TO THE U.S., WITH WIDE CONTACTS IN THE U.S. AND AN ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL BACKGROUND. DE OLLOQUI HOPED FOR THE NUMBER ONE POSITION, AND HAS INDICATED THAT HE STILL HOPES TO MOVE UP TO IT BEFORE TOO MUCH TIME HAS PASSED.

B. UNDERSECRETARY "B" (CURRENTLY POLITICAL AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS)--ALFONSO ROSENSWEIG-DIAZ, FORMER CHIEF LEGAL ADVISOR TO SRE, A LONG-TIME PROFESSIONAL, WITH A REPUTATION AS A FOLLOWER RATHER THAN AN INNOVATOR. HE HAS A U.S. WIFE; HIS BROTHER IS CURRENTLY MEXICAN AMBASSADOR TO THE U.N.

C. UNDERSECRETARY "C" (CURRENTLY MULTILATERAL AFFAIRS)
--MARIA EMILIA TELLEZ BENOIT, FORMER OFFICIAL MAYOR (CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER) OF SRE. MS. TELLEZ IS ALSO A CAREER DIPLOMAT AND LAWYER WITH 30 YEARS SERVICE, MOST OF IT IN THE SECRETARIAT. REPORTEDLY SHE HAS TURNED DOWN IMPORTANT AMBASSADORIAL POSITIONS BECAUSE SHE IS CARING FOR AN AGED MOTHER. SHE WAS AT UNAM LAW SCHOOL WITH BOTH ECHEVERRIA AND LOPEZ PORTILLO AND HAS TIES OF FRIENDSHIP FROM THIS PERIOD.

D. OFFICIAL MAYOR - GUILLERMINA SANCHEZ MEZA DE SOLIS, FORMER PRI DEPUTY, 1970-73, TRAINED IN ECONOMICS AND MARRIED TO AN ECONOMIST. HER FOREIGN AFFAIRS EXPERIENCE, IF ANY, IS UNCLEAR.

E. AMBASSADOR TO THE U.S. - HUGO B. MARGAIN, CURRENTLY AMBASSADOR TO LONDON. MARGAIN SERVED AS AMBASSADOR TO THE CONFIDENTIAL

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U.S. UNDER DIAZ ORDAZ AND AS SECRETARY OF FINANCE UNDER ECHEVERRIA UNTIL LOPEZ PORTILLO WAS APPOINTED TO THAT JOB.

FOR THE MOST PART, THE ABOVE POSITIONS WERE FILLED BY FOREIGN AFFAIRS PROFESSIONALS, RATHER THAN IDEOLOGUES. DE OLLOQUI AND MARGAIN BRING TO THIS FOREIGN POLICY TEAM CONSIDERABLE EXPERIENCE, ECONOMIC EXPERTIS, AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE U.S., WHICH SHOULD PROVE VERY HELPFUL TO JLP DURING THIS DIFFICULT PERIOD.

IN SUM, THESE SRE APPOINTMENTS APPEAR TO GIVE THE NEW PRESIDENT A SOLID TEAM TO HANDLE FOREIGN POLICY IN THE NEAR TERM.

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